



Statement of India on Agenda item 9: Adoption of the report of the 2nd Inter-Governmental Group of Experts on e-commerce and the digital economy - Delivered by Dr. Sadre Alam, First Secretary on 08 June 2018

Thank you Mr. President.

2. On agenda item 9 regarding the report of the 2nd Inter-Governmental Group of Experts on e-commerce and the digital economy which has been placed for consideration by the 65th trade and development board, we wish to state the following:

The successful operationalisation of this IGE in phase - I of the Nairobi Maafikiano has been helpful in furthering the developmental agenda in this emerging area. As the background document on this agenda item was submitted late, we reiterate our request that background documents be submitted by the Secretariat in time to allow adequate preparation. Further, we recommend that:

I. The next session of the IGE on e-commerce and the digital economy should not be held in parallel with the E-commerce week as the deliberations of the latter should feed into the former. On a related note, the various sessions of the E-commerce week should not overlap. There must, preferably, be a summarizing session at the end of each day of the e-commerce week. As delegations from most of the developing countries are small in size, it is impossible for the experts to attend all the sessions.

II. As provided for in the working modality of the IGE Terms of Reference, the Secretariat should make arrangements for live webcast and remote participation of experts from developing countries who could not physically participate or send adequate number of experts.

III. Information about the elections to the offices of the IGE must be shared with all Member States in advance inviting nominations from those interested. This process should be open, inclusive and transparent.

IV. To facilitate inter-governmental consensus on broad policy recommendations during the IGE session, there should be a clearly defined modality and specific time allotted to conclude this process. It would be advisable to constitute, at the outset, a drafting committee comprising interested Governmental experts. This committee could be tasked with coming up with draft policy recommendations at the end of each session held on the guiding questions and, substantively, be reflective of the discussions held during these sessions. The last day must be entirely devoted to reaching consensus on these draft policy recommendations in a transparent and inclusive manner. Throughout this Member State's experts driven process, the support provided by the Secretariat should be adequate, of quality and timely.

V. Lastly, for the much desired revitalization of the inter-governmental machinery, a rigorous follow-up of the recommendations of important inter-governmental bodies such as the IGE on e-commerce and the digital economy is essential. The Secretariat should prepare and submit to Member States, well in advance, a background meeting document detailing therein how the developmental gains from e-commerce and the digital economy have been

progressively realized as a result of implementation of the previous IGE recommended policies. This should be submitted as a background document before every next session of the IGE.

4. We also express the hope that the guiding topics and questions which could not be agreed upon by experts during the IGE session as required by the ToR are agreed upon by Member States by consensus at an early date.

5. Regarding the Working Group (WG) on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy, we wish to state the following:

The recommendation contained para B.2 of the report, submitted for consideration of the TDB, clarifies that the objective of the Working group is to ‘contribute to and advance cooperation on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy’, the following is proposed to be added to this and the terms of reference of the Working group, whenever prepared by the secretariat.

‘The overarching aim of the Working Group on measuring e-commerce and the digital economy would be, through its own as well as other ongoing works, to generate empirical sets of data that would help develop evidence based policies for maximizing the developmental gains from e-commerce and the digital economy and thus strengthening its developmental dimension’.

6. This would be a natural corollary to the broad policy focus of the IGE on e-commerce and the digital economy, mentioned in its ToR, which is ‘maximizing the developmental gains from e-commerce and the digital economy, and addressing associated challenges, and thus strengthening its developmental dimension’, under which the Working group is proposed to be established.

7. We request the secretariat to submit the draft ToR of the Working group to Member States for consideration and adoption. Further, the outcomes of the Working group should feed into the discussions of the IGE and this should be a standing agenda item of the subsequent IGEs. We also seek from the secretariat an update on the availability of additional extra budgetary resource for operationalisation of the proposed Working group as detailed in the concept note document no. TD/B/EDE/2/3 dated 21 February 2018.

8. To conclude, we request that the adoption of the report of the 2nd IGE on e-commerce and the digital economy and the working group by the trade and development board be subject to the afore-mentioned recommendations and that this be reflected in the decision and record of this meeting, as appropriate.

Thank you.

08 June 2018